medical missionary

No. 6
1968

He who is sent enters upon the life and mission of Him who "emptied himself, taking the nature of a slave." Therefore, he must be ready to stand by his vocation for a lifetime, and to renounce himself and all those whom he thus far considered his own and instead to become "all things to all men." Announcing the Gospel among the nations, he confidently makes known the mystery of Christ, whose ambassador he is. In Christ he dares to speak as he ought, and he is not ashamed of the scandal of the Cross. Following in his Master's footsteps, meek and humble of heart, he shows that His yoke is easy and His burden light. By a truly evangelical life, in much patience, in longsuffering, in kindness, in unaffected love, he bears witness to his Lord.

Decree on the missionary activity of the Church, 24 –

medical missionary

Volume 42 • Number 6 • 1968

PILGRIMS:

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The Himalayas,
the roof
of the world.

the CHRISTIAN

Vietnam

Nepal

Homily given by Rev. Robert Hovda, SJ, at 1968 Liturgical Week, Washington, D.C.

To all us pilgrims,
travellers and refugees:
grace be ours
for a self-emptying in service,
and peace
from God our Father
and from our brother, Jesus Christ.

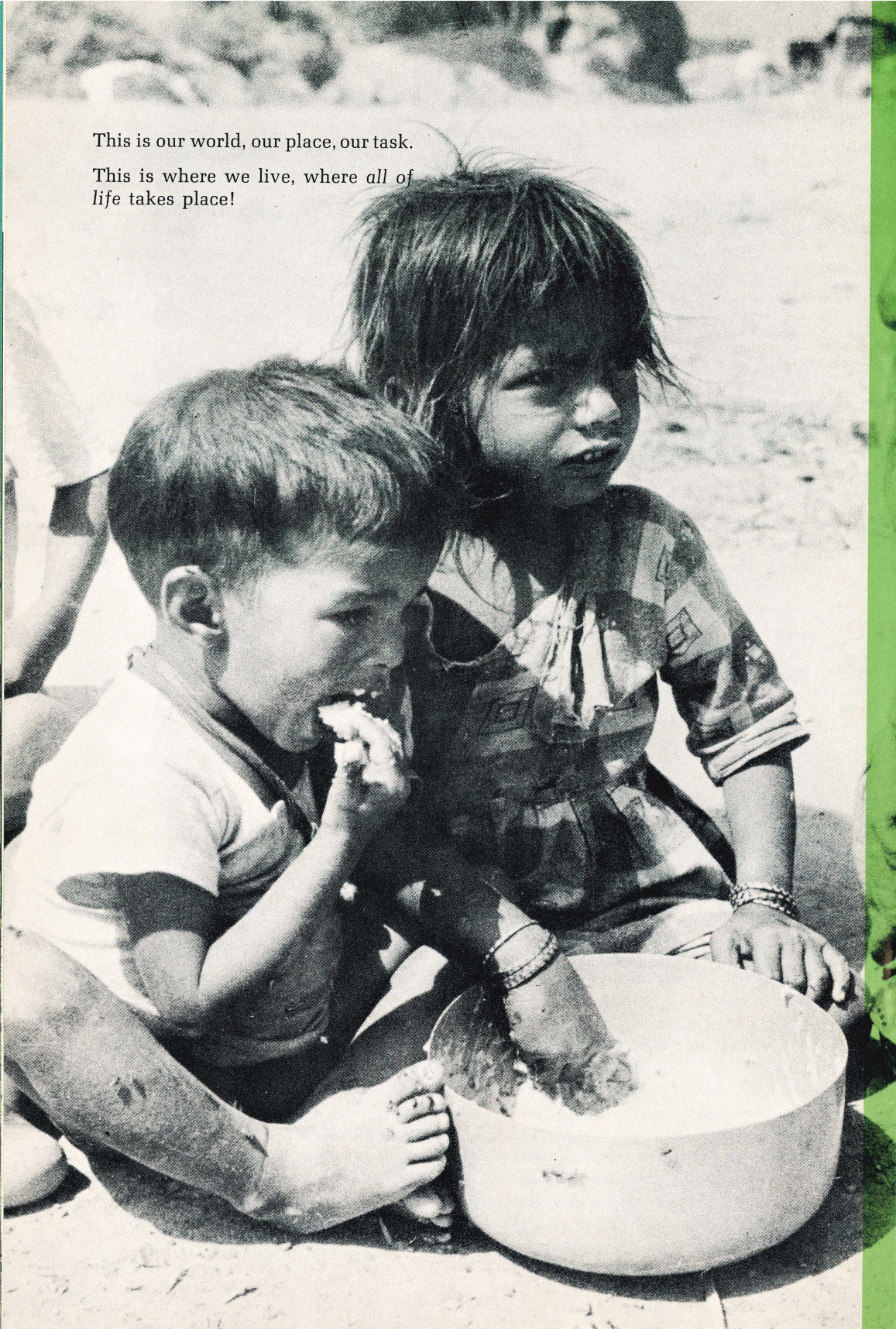
Welkom, South Africa

For some time we have been lost, and are only now beginning to find our way; we have been blind and are beginning to regain our sight, our vision; we have been deaf and mute, but our hearing and our speech are just beginning to acquire the qualities of genuine communication. Having stepped for a long moment out of the stream of evolution, growth, development, achievement—we sat out more than one in the dance of life. We are putting our toes in again (metaphors are for mixing) and discovering that the water's fine. Advances and events in the time which we now see as *our time* are moving us out of our fortress into the battleground . . . off the island we had grown to love and on to the conti-

Sister Phyllis Shuhler, Philadelphia.

nent's broad expanse. Oh, we still have our island types, our lovers of the fortress. But many of us are back in circulation, part of the human race.

Today, by a strange reversal, it is the church that is the Prodigal Son, returning to its proper home, the world. But, instead of embrace and fattened calf, the God in whom love and justice are one greets us with the starving people of Biafra, a Vietnam devastated by our war machine, an invaded Czechoslovakia, a United States increasingly divided between angry blacks and whites sick with racism, the now-visible poor ready to rise up against an insensitive and affluent society.



This is our world, our place, our task.

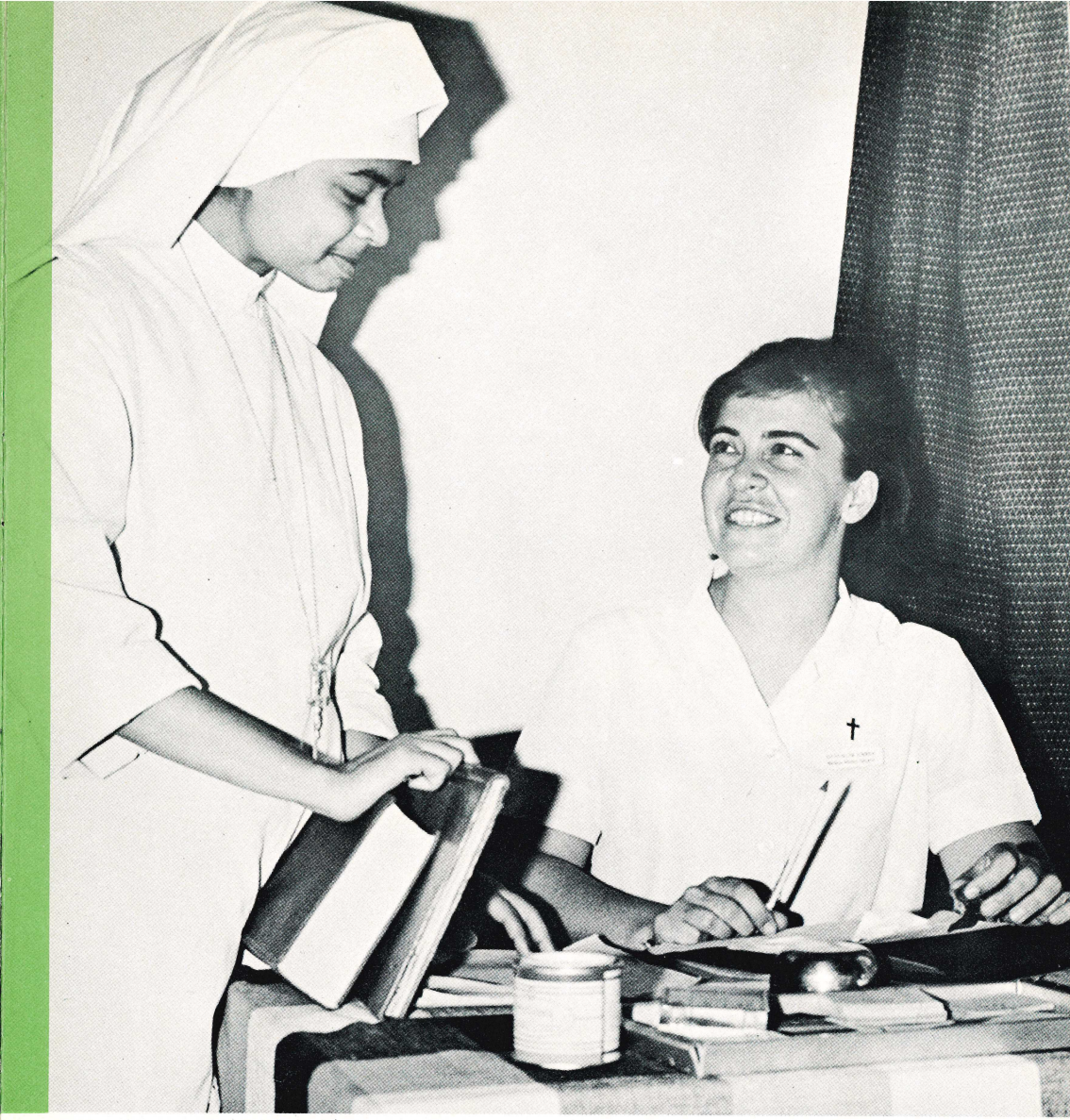
This is where we live, where *all of life* takes place!

India

Sister Nancy, medical technologist, Maracaibo, Venezuela.

This realization has not yet penetrated our fortress and island habits and ways of thinking. But when it does begin to penetrate, then our church-consciousness, our ecclesiology is *transformed.* From the finished, polished, "perfect society"—the fully achieved reality that George Dunne writes about—we move into a whole new atmosphere, a new life, the newness of the gospel, where *everything* is in the category of unfinished business . . . where life is work and church is mission . . . where the only glory we can bask in is the commitment of our energies to the revolutionary task of making, creating, fashioning, tearing down and building a world fit for man as we know him in Jesus Christ.

From the posture of sedentary residents of a home away from our true home, the world, our style of life is changing. We are pilgrims, travellers and refugees—making (as Christopher Fry once wrote) wher-



Sister Germaine (left) and Sister Helene, India.

ever we are as much like home as possible. Refugees from that static and finished universe, refugees from that closed system, refugees from that oh-so-ordered cosmos, we are fleeing into the unknown and uncertain, where we become again gospel-pilgrims, gospel-travellers. "Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purse, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff . . ." All the baggage we have carried must be scrutinized now for its utility. We have to examine it and sort it and throw out everything—even the good things that impede our human mission and its gospel dimension-in-depth. With Jacob, we have to learn how to travel light, to take one of the stones to be found *any* place, make it our pillow, and lie down where we are. "And the Lord was there!" "Truly, the Lord is in this place and I never knew it!" "I never knew it!" "The Lord was *there!*"

Where? Where do you think the Lord would be, who introduced his mission thus: ". . . to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the down-trodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor." Jesus describes the outcasts of society, the alienated, the deviates, the properly resentful and rebellious, because only when justice is done and the rights and dignity of man respected can love be more than pious hypocrisy. That's where he is! "Truly, the Lord is in this place and I never knew it!" *We* never knew it! Are we discovering it more fully so that we spread like Jacob's children "to the west and the east, to the north and the south, and all the tribes of the earth," finding the places where man is suffering a condition unworthy of Jesus Christ? *Open, listening, sharing, reconciling.* Conscious that we have something to share, both in our human talents and in the church's gospel, but also conscious that others have things to share with us. Conscious that the vitality of the good news is equalled by its very modest limits.

Like Abraham, we set out without knowing where we are going. But we are sustained by faith and hope and love, at least in some small measure. "Be sure that I am with you . . . I will not desert you before I have done all that I have promised you." And we are drawn on by a vision of the form and future of making—a vision that we have in Jesus Christ. And we have the problem. We are beginning to see the problems, and ourselves as part of them. Now that we see them, will we put our minds and our talents and our money and our time *to them?* So that we can say, with Jesus, "This text is being

Pakistan

Guatemala

fulfilled today even as you listen"? If so, our piecemeal solutions will be the stones for building a new city of man—and a new one is required. The old city is going down—either to be replaced by humanly responsive social structures or to dissolve in a heap of ashes.

Pilgrims, travellers, refugees, what was said of Abraham may be said one day of us: "All these died in faith, before receiving any of the things that had been promised, but they saw them in the far distance and welcomed them, recognizing that they were only strangers and nomads on the earth." Can we see them in the distance, a distance shorter now than in the days of Abraham? Do we welcome them?—these revolutions we need to build the city of man? Revolutions which, I am deeply convinced, were artificially inseminated by the church of Jesus Christ but which, much more obviously, are still virgin to its touch and its embrace.

If we are already refugees, if we have fled the rigid confines of a too-well defined cosmos that once had

its uses, if we can envision no possible return to the island or the fortress—then come, be pilgrims, travellers. Ready to ride loose and free (and that means not just being loose and free) but *riding,* moving, changing, exploring new, uncharted territories of mind and imagination and social possibilities. Willing to risk property and life and even our pet theories, to be the seed of that "better homeland," the new city. Condemning no one and nothing. Greeting everyone and everything. Questioning, searching, passionately reacting to the plight of any person and all mankind. Never fearing tension, conflict, a good fight, revolution—but always in Christ and in the church, that is, in *peace.* Rejecting the methods of violence and of destruction, not only because of love but also because they are inimical to the ends we seek—truly human, fully human ends.

There's nothing easy here. But this tells it like it is. And perhaps we Christians need nothing more, as a start, than to get in the habit of *listening.*

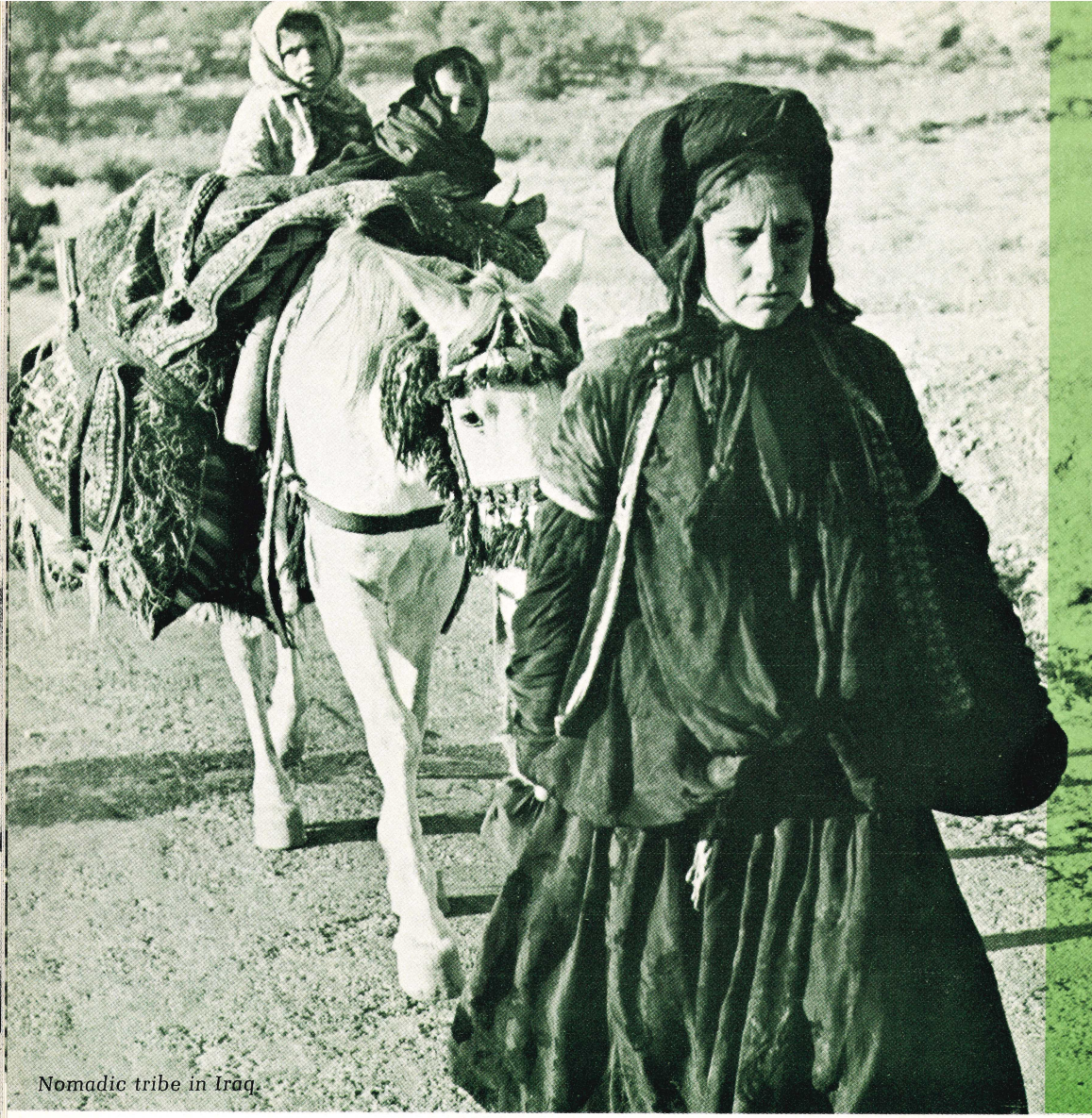
the MISSIONER

By Sister Miriam Therese Winter

*"A hard coming they had of it"**
those early missioners
the Wise Men
who left their homes
to follow a star.

**T. S. Eliot: "Ash Wednesday"*

India



Nomadic tribe in Iraq.

They chose the hardships involved
in their Christ-quest:
the risk
the loneliness
the possibility of failure
the unknown nuances of life on the road
the threat of no return.

Sister [illegible] Rawalpindi, West Pakistan.

So do I.
There is a hint of promise
dim and undetermined
in my wanting to do what I do
be what I am.
There is a chance
that something will come of it
a good chance
that it will be enough
for me
and them
especially, God, for them.

Line-up of patients, Mpendzwa, Congo.

But is it really equal after all,
this choice to be like them?
I choose to have no home
or have a home away from home
pitching my tent near some strange, distant city
I have never seen
and may not see again.

But they
these myriad others
robbed of rights
they have a right to,
they have no home
nor choice besides.

Vietnamese child

Techiman, Ghana

And so I have it better still than they.
Me with my security
in belonging somewhere
now
being home this moment
being loved and sheltered
always
and everywhere
with You
and in You
and through You,
can I reach, touch, really touch their need?

Tibetan woman.

Sister Josephine, Patna, India.

Yet let me go
to share a bit with them
give of my abundance:
the love
the life
the laughter
the song
the healing touch you gift me with,
wide open
that their own gifts of personhood
might fill the gaping crevices
in me,
that together we can be
courageous in our homelessness
intent on the pursuit of
our star.

There is a chance
that something will come of it
a good chance
that it will be enough
for me
and them.

thehomeless

By Sister Angelica McInerney

A year ago last November the Bihar famine was officially declared ended. This disaster, the worst in the last 100 years, hit 46,654 villages or 65.5% of Bihar State's 52 million people. Then the rains came, bringing floods in their wake, leaving hundreds homeless, jobless and seemingly without hope.

Whole families were uprooted and countless lives disrupted. Many continue to travel great distances looking for employment to feed their families. Here at Holy Family Hospital in Patna we are constantly beseiged with requests for employment. The other day a boy of 15 who looks no older than nine was admitted to the hospital with pleurisy and high temperature. The father said he was on his way from the south, looking for work. Why on earth he came to Patna, I will never know, as there is little work here.

Today I found a man with a temperature of 103 sitting under a tree. I asked him what was wrong, and he said: "Nothing. I cannot be sick as then I cannot work, and if I cannot work, I cannot eat." We talked him into being admitted to the hospital. He has no family, no place to stay, no one to care about him. For now, the hospital is home.

The fear of being one day bereft of home and shelter is never totally absent among the poor. With the ominous threat of the heavy monsoon hanging over their heads, our very poor workers who have been trying to build or repair their homes, are getting panicky. They acquired a small piece of land several years ago in the village of Baskutty on which temporary dwellings were built. Now several years later most are still living in them.

It was 115-degrees in the shade the day we went to visit our employees' homes and families. The clay earth was parched and dry; the sun beat down mercilessly on the laborers, mostly women, who had to go all the way to the Ganges River for a bag of sand. A new stretch of land, without trees, without water—it reminded me of the desert.

Children of all sizes, scantily clad or naked, came running and shouting to greet us; chickens and dogs scooted underfoot; cows and goats sniffed here and there in the garbage; babies covered with huge flies lay sleeping on the ground under an umbrella of palm and rags. Houses stood in all stages of erection, some just a pile of bricks. No one was idle. Young and old were working to beat the monsoon which brings life to so many and hardship and death to countless others.

The homes I saw were small; most consisted of only one room. Very few had windows, none had water or latrines. When it is not raining some of the family can sleep outside, but when the monsoon rains flood the little quarters, who can sleep? Workers arrive in the morning too tired to perform their duties; tempers flare from edgy nerves ac-

The family of Darnan, watchman at our Patna hospital.

centuated by lack of rest, children crying, wet clothing, and hot, humid temperatures.

During these rainy seasons, six or ten people sleeping in one airless room only contributes to the spread of T.B. now on the uprise in Bihar in the aftermath of the famine. The high banks of the Ganges prevent the water that accumulates during the monsoon from flowing off rapidly. While this makes the soil rich and fertile for needed crops, it is the cause of violent epidemics of cholera and typhoid.

It takes a long time to acquire one or two *khattas* (small measurement) of land to build a one-room house with veranda, when the *khatta* costs anywhere from 700 to 1,500 rupees, more than a cleaner or *mali* earns in two years. The salaries and daily wages we pay at the hospital are based on the city's accepted standard, but living costs are so high. How can these people have anything left over for a home after paying rent, and feeding, clothing, educating five

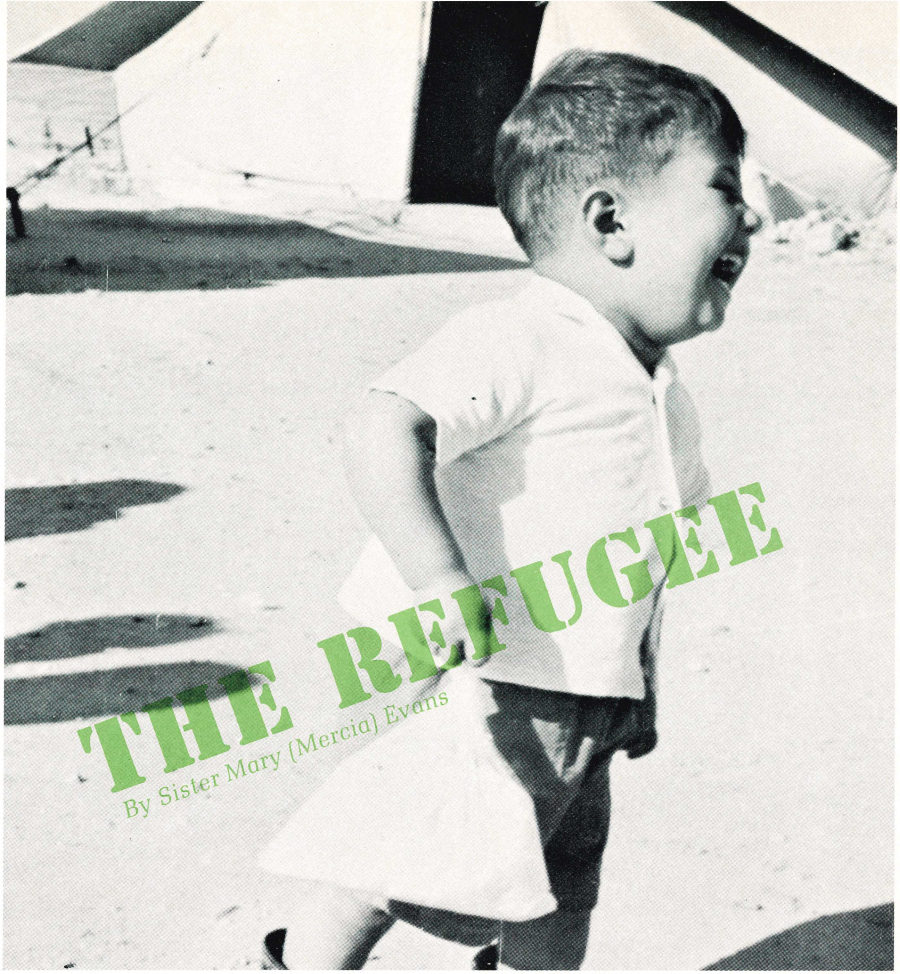
Workers race to complete homes before the monsoon.

or six children?

Those of our employees who are trying to build or repair their homes have two or three members of their own family working all day on the building. After working a full day at the hospital they themselves join the family and work on the building as long as daylight lasts. They know that if the rains come before the roof is on, all the precious cement, lime, sand and labor that have been bought so dearly will all be washed away, putting off hope of release from misery for another year.

As I write this, landslides and floods are sweeping Bihar. There has already been a terrible loss of life and property and cattle. Whole villages have been washed away. Some of the remaining towns are under 8 to 10 feet of water. Thousands of passengers have been stranded. All communication is cut off. Over 5 million people have been affected by the disastrous floods in Bihar.

All we can do is wait for the waters to subside and begin again.



THE REFUGEE

By Sister Mary (Mercia) Evans

Wael, discharged from welfare clinic with his last allowance of powdered milk.

Behind the crisp, "business-as-usual" appearance of Amman, the bustling capital of Jordan, is the paradox of its "permanent" refugee camp.

There are 600,000 Jordanians in Amman's suburbs, living in well-to-do stone houses that scramble up and down the city's seven bare hills. But deep within the city and well into its outskirts lies a less attractive situation — approximately 700,000 refugees displaced from both the 1948 and the 1967 wars with Israel, crowded into camps of 14,000 people or 35,000, or more.

What is a typical camp like? It usually consists of small, very small, stone houses built within a walled enclosure, with little space between one house and the next. Because such housing is "temporary," no permanent provision has been made for such things as facilities and drainage. Relief supplies assure food and blankets—and a doled-out existence. First and second generations have been added to the families who first settled in the camps. Children who have never known any home but this, harbor symptoms of kwashiorkor, the protein deficiency disease, despite their deceivingly plump, well-fed appearance.

There is another kind of camp, erected to shelter the thousands of refugees that have poured into Amman in the past year. Basically the

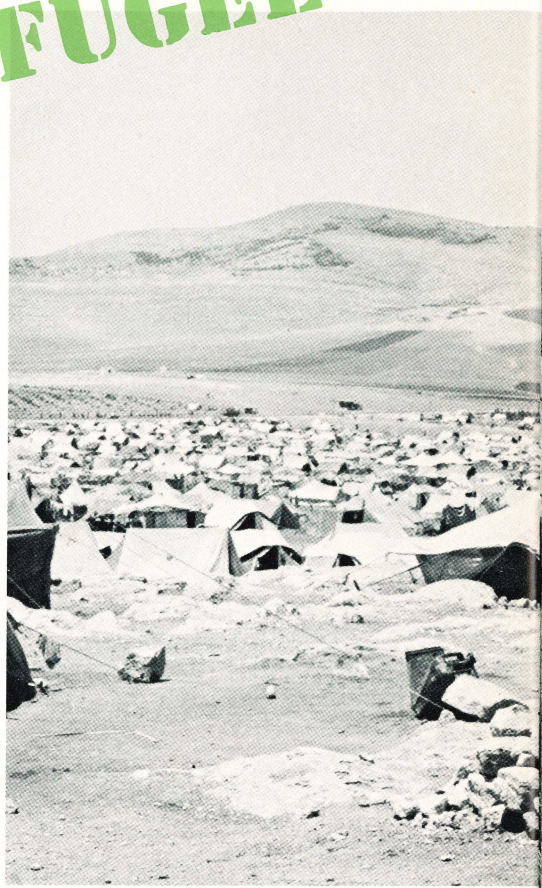
Amneh came into the hospital from the Jordan Valley.

same as the other camps, these newer ones are gayer looking, sporting red and blue and yellow camping tents rushed over with relief supplies to meet the immediate need. Bright—yet so desperately inadequate against the cold winds of a Jordan winter. Do these people also face 20 years of refugee-ism? It is a nagging, unspoken fear.

We are tempted to ask, why doesn't somebody do something? Yet it is important to remember that the problem is complex. It is neither neglect nor lack of concern for such realities on the part of the government or voluntary agencies or the people themselves that has preserved the status quo. Much is being done in many areas to alleviate the inhumanity of existing conditions. But because of border disturbances, continual small warfare, the overwhelming size of the problem and the utter lack of means to meet and solve its crying needs, the plight of the refugee continues to exist. For 20 long years a people has lived in suspended hope that the situation is only momentary, that something is bound to change, soon.

While no major change seems imminent, efforts to make the situation liveable are daily occurrences. Busy nurses concentrate on child care, nutrition, health education and preventive medicine, spending long hours as they visit the scattered camps.

THE REFUGEE



This little child is a victim of TB.

There are five camps at Baqaa, located on the road to Jaresh, one of which is estimated to shelter between 35,000 to 40,000 refugees bombed out of their original camps in the Jordan Valley last March. At Baqaa each child is allotted a kilogram of milk powder per month until it reaches 10 kilograms in weight.

We Medical Mission Sisters too do what we can to help. Our hospital in Amman is surrounded by many distribution centers where hundreds of refugees wait daily for food and clothing. It is impossible to be uninvolved in a need so clearly visible from the hospital windows. After a full day of attending the needs of the sick in the hospital, what little time is left is often spent at the large camp resulting from the 1948 war, located just behind the hospital. Last winter Sister Marguerite Petit received a quantity of clothing from well-wishers in Holland and, with the help of other Sisters, distributed the clothing among the new refugees.

The Sisters also took medicines and blankets to all the local camps during the first chaotic days after the six-day war, before the welfare clinics and government organizations could get established. Last year Sister Marguerite spent a week of her vacation from the hospital working in the welfare clinics of the "Save the Children" organization with a group of young doctors and nurses well-trained in public health nursing. This year both Sister Marguerite

Baqaa refugee camp, about 5 miles north of Amman.

Sister Marguerite makes a friend

THE REFUGEE

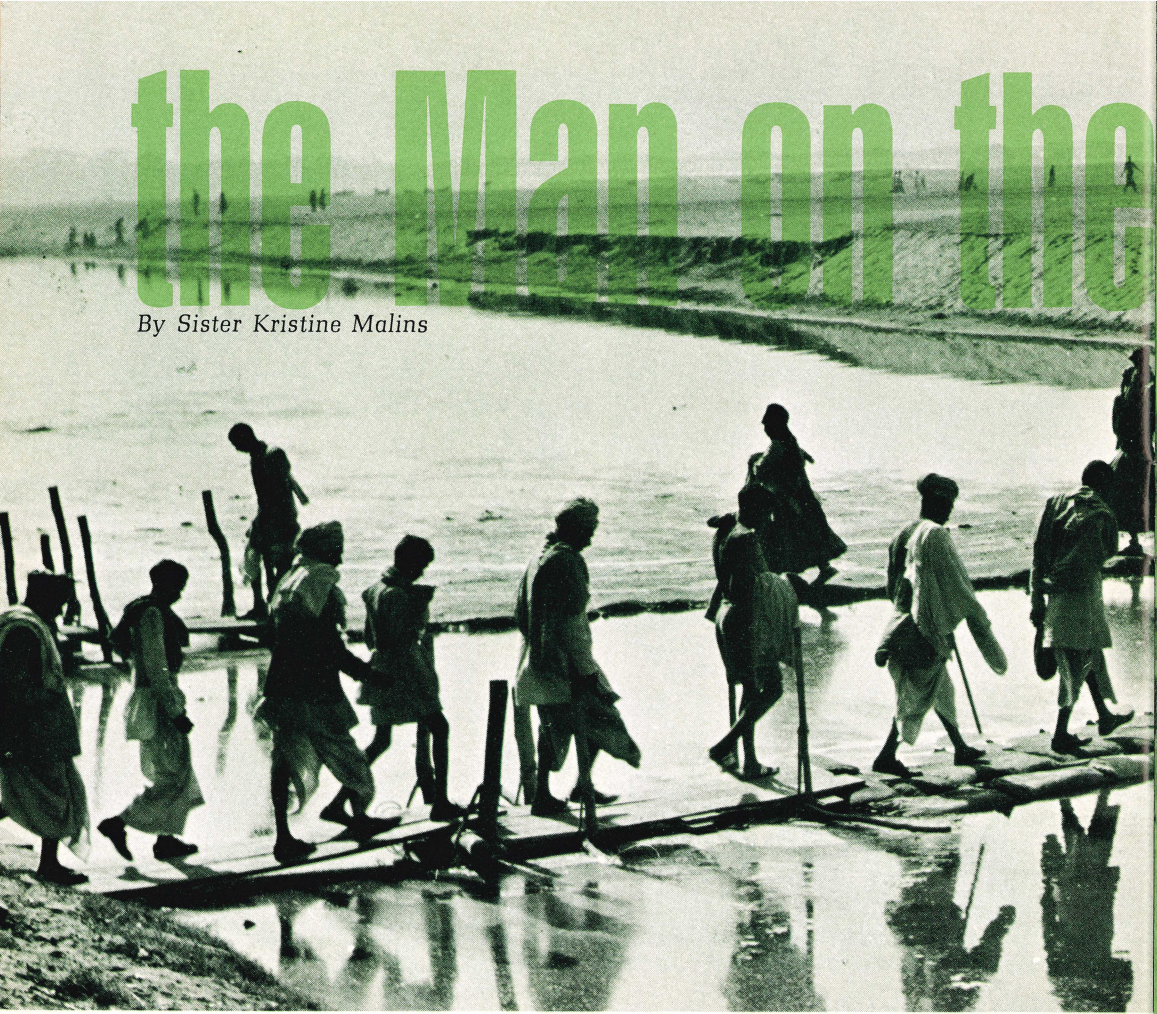
and Sister Josephine are preparing to spend some time doing this, one in the welfare clinic in Ma'an, the other at Baqaa Camp.

At the hospital our work has continued busier than ever, despite the general state of alarm throughout the country. There is much blindness due to trachoma in this land of dust and dryness. Especially susceptible are the stone-breakers; there is no labor legislation to protect their health. All the stones for buildings and for the stonebeds of asphalt roads are prepared by men sitting on their haunches, laboriously breaking big stones into little ones. Exposed constantly to flying dust and the intense glare of the sun, these laborers often contract diseases of the eye.

In addition to its public health and curative services, our hospital in Jordan offers a means of employment and education to a people desperately deprived. A high proportion of the staff are refugees, as are most of the students in our school for practical nurses. Of the 18-20 young men and women now being trained as practical nurses by our Sisters, all but one are from a refugee existence. Their determination is an effort to break the 20-year-long chain of events that have bound half a nation to instability. Small as our own contribution may be, our Sisters continue to work assiduously, glad for the chance to show a fraction of "nowhere people" what it is like to have somewhere to go and be *someone.*

the Man on the

By Sister Kristine Malins



Jesus Christ was a man on the move. Born during a political migration, he spent his childhood years in a foreign country and later devoted three years of a public ministry to travelling the length and breadth of Israel, teaching and healing. Eventually, he died outside Jerusalem, disowned by his own people, and scorned by the Romans. He was buried in another's tomb.

"The Son of Man has nowhere he can rest his head, nowhere he can claim as his own," Jesus once told an eager disciple. (Lk. 9,58) And to those who would have kept him in their own town of Capharnaum Jesus explained, "I must tell the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well—that is my mission." (Lk. 4,43)

Jesus had a message to deliver. It kept him moving, changing, growing. He was sent by God to say in word and miracle that the Kingdom of Heaven had finally arrived. He had to be accessible, present to all people. And those who welcomed him into their homes took part in his itinerant mission and received the blessing of God, a peace that healed them. In fact, to these very people—Levi the tax collector, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Zaccheus the publican, Peter and his mother-in-law—Jesus entrusted his message. They, in their very persons, were sent to make their Lord accessible and pres-

India

ent to every place and all times.

To allow the word of Christ to make us into message, is to become his followers . . . to become likewise men on the move. Our inheritance as Christians is the call to make a pilgrimage, to join the journey of the ages. Our sign of authenticity? A kind of gypsy heart that travels throughout this world of ours with a song of freedom and an incredible hope for the future. Our task as Christians wherever we are and whatever we do is to discover and fulfill the tremendous potential of the here and now. Some Christians may actually carry their possessions on their backs and cover the earth in a literal way. These are the sailors, the ambassadors, the missionaries. Others—like the refugees, the migrant workers, the orphans—may have their homes and belongings taken from them because of war or physical disaster. These are especially close to the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, many of us are born and live and die in the same twenty or so square miles of a populated city or a rural farm area. Yet even we are pilgrims. Part and parcel of our existence is the fact that our destiny lies in another world, today's world transformed. It is the warp and woof of our Christian living to bring about this new world. The actualization of the here and now is eternity. "In my Father's house, there

are many rooms. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you?" (Jn. 14,2) "Wherever your treasure is, you may be certain that your heart will be there too!" (Lk. 12,34)

Because of our adherence to Christ, we Christians will at times feel lonely and alienated. "Then will come the time when men will hand you over to persecution, and kill you. And all nations will hate you because you bear my name." (Mt. 24,9) Simultaneously what is "most nobly human and most widely of the earth" (Chardin) must receive a wholehearted welcome from us because it is up to us to actualize the Lord's promise of perfection and peace.

We live as a constant paradox to ourselves and to the rest of mankind. The Lord's words somehow ring true —"Whoever tries to preserve his life will lose it and the man who is prepared to lose his life will perserve it." (Mt. 10,39) Ours is the pain of constantly pitching our tent and folding it up again, of befriending strangers and bidding them goodbye, of loving the world but never being truly satisfied with it, of pouring our heart and soul into a project others have begun and still others will finish. If we would not be torn in two by the tension of this truth we must learn to live provisionally—to measure the road well. We need to make the most of occasions when we can gather by the roadside to break bread and compare directions. Joy must be discovered in the *going* as we never really arrive, not even in a lifetime.

EDITOR: *Sister Miriam Therese Winter; Art Director: Michael C. Louridas; Art Credit: Inside covers, Sister Victoria Connelly; Photography: John L. Alexandrowicz.*

COVER PHOTO:
Clay pottery on display at Gumla Market, Mandar, India.

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MEDICAL MISSIONARY magazine changes to quarterly

Beginning with Issue #1, 1969, MEDICAL MISSIONARY will be published 4 times a year:

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. . . an account of the works of the Medical Mission Sisters in 1968

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For though I am no man's slave, yet I have made myself everyone's slave, that I might win more men to Christ. (1 Cor. 9:16)